

Pawnshop Prize

RICKENBACKER M-11

Although Rickenbacker is best known for its innovative 6- and 12-string electric guitars, the company also made a number of amplifiers that were designed to go toe-to-toe with the best from Fender and Gibson. For example, the M-11 featured here is so similar to an early-'50s tweed Deluxe that you'd probably flunk a blindfold listening test if you heard the two side-by-side. Like the Deluxe, the M-11 is a 1x12 combo with three inputs and top-mounted volume and tone controls. It also has almost the same tube complement: two 6SC7 dual triodes, a pair of 6V6 output tubes, and a 5V4 rectifier. The primary difference between the two circuits is that the M-11's is wired completely point-to-point, while the Fender's is laid out neatly on fiberboard.

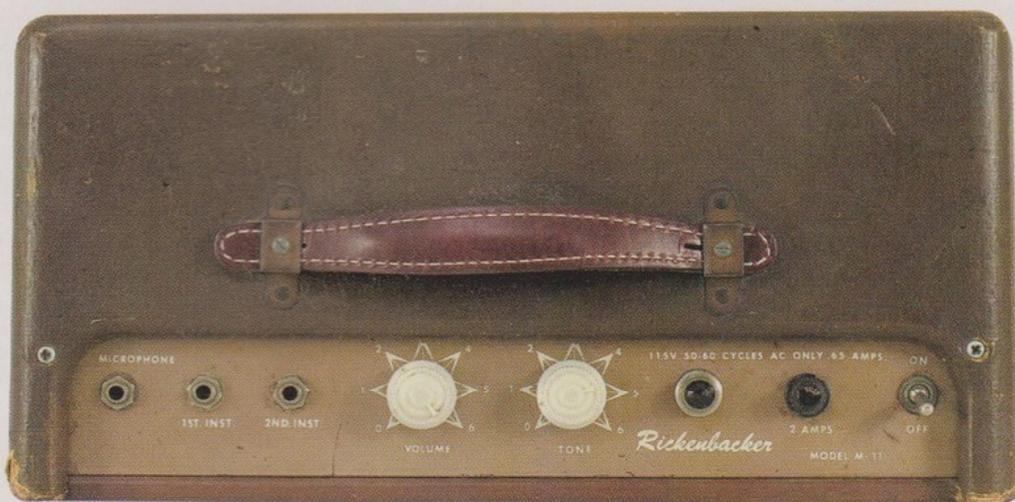
This M-11 sports vintage (and possibly original) Tung-Sol and RCA tubes, but the baffle board is new, and the amp's stock alnico speaker has been replaced with a Weber Ferromax. The solid-wood cabinet is covered with brown leatherette, and the handle is stitched cowhide.

The M-11 is rich sounding and surprisingly loud. Plugging into the microphone input yields the most gain, and you get thick, grinding rhythm and lead sounds with the volume set at around ten o'clock. The instrument inputs have slightly less gain, but they also deliver big, ballsy tones and superb dynamics. The tone control is well voiced to provide just the right amount of crispness and definition. Like a tweed Deluxe, the M-11 sounds like a miniature Marshall. Its tough tones are meaty and complex, and the 6SC7s (which were the hottest preamp tubes available prior to the advent of the 12AX7) provide exceptional harmonic balance.

Anyone stymied by the high



With its octal preamp tubes and pair of 6V6s, the M-11 is very similar to an early tweed Fender Deluxe.



price of a tweed Deluxe would be wise to hunt down one of these little Ricks. For under \$200 (the owner of this amp paid \$135), you could have something that's

the sonic equivalent of a \$1,000 Deluxe, and you could probably leave the M-11 unattended on the bandstand without fear of it getting ripped off. That's smart

shopping at its smartest!

—ART THOMPSON

Special thanks to Marc Games for the loan of his amp. 🎸